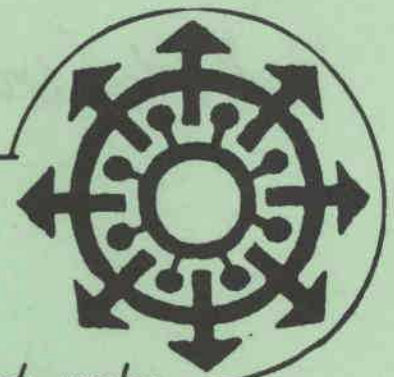


# Net-link

Newsletter of International Grail Networks



VOLUME III

NUMBER 1

MARCH 1987

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### NET-LINK LETTERBOX

22



Dear Readers,

As most of you know by now, the next issue of Net-Link will be devoted to the faith-concern statements ('Testimonies') of the various Grail countries.

It has occurred to us, however, that if anyone has Network news or ideas to share, it would be a pity to wait until a whole year from now for that sharing! Therefore we suggest that you send such items to your Network coordinators as usual, and we will print whatever the coordinators send along to us. Please note that that deadline is

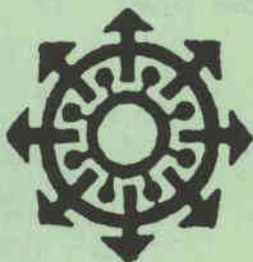
25 AUGUST -- ALL NETWORK MATERIAL TO COORDINATORS

And then, one more reminder:

15 SEPTEMBER 1987--

ALL TESTIMONIES TO

Carol White  
DE TILTENBERG  
Zilkerduinweg 375  
2114 AM Vogelenzang  
Netherlands



# Living Faith

## SHARING CORRESPONDENCE LINKS

In April 1986, as a way to promote more sharing between the members of the Living Faith Network, we Coordinators proposed a system of 'correspondence partners'. In our letter to Network members we suggested four different imaginary situations. We then asked each person to

- reflect on one situation and share her reflections with her correspondence partner;
- also share her thoughts about the imaginary situation with her local Grail friends;
- send a copy of her letter to her partner to one of the Network coordinators. (This meant that her response might be used as part of our Network's contribution to on-going dialogue in Net-Link.)

We are very grateful to the Network members who wrote to their partners and sent us copies of their thoughts. Because the writers were thinking about imaginary--but potentially real--Grail situations, the responses were very interesting. In fact, we think they can give us another way to reflect on our religious reality as we prepare for the IGA in 1988. With this issue of Net-Link we will begin to share some of the letters we have received and in future issues will share more with all of you. We also hope that Network members who have not yet written to their partners will be inspired to do so: It is never too late!

One imaginary situation many responded to was the following:

Imagine that you are at an international Grail meeting. There are people there from every Grail country. Mass is scheduled for the evening, and at 6.30 pm the priest calls to say that he has an emergency and cannot come. Someone in the group suggests that the service go ahead. There is an ordained woman and a lay woman who offer to perform the service. Some people think that is a good idea. Others prefer to postpone it until another day when the priest could come. What would you like to do? How would you feel if the mass happened that night? How would you feel if it were postponed?

Network members respond:

From the Philippines:

I had attended a Eucharistic service conducted by a woman minister at Grailville some years ago. I felt apprehensive when I was deciding to do this. Before the service I checked the masses at the Loveland parish to be sure I would not miss mass. However, during the service, which was held in the Oratory, I experienced a meaningful and inspiring occasion to be with God. I felt I did not have to attend mass at Loveland any more after that service. So, I personally would agree to the suggestion that the service go ahead....

From Australia:

It all seems to hinge on the acceptance or rejection of the ordained woman....The question of ordination of women seems to surface in Australia every time we speak of different ministries in the Church for women. Ordination must come, we agree, especially when we consider the number of priests who are retiring or leaving and the few who are replacing them. I'd hate the ordination of women to come just because of this and I'd hate women to be caught up in the present male-dominated structures.



As to the imaginary situation: I think I'd be one of those who would prefer to postpone Mass until another day when the priest could come, and find another way of praising and thanking God... (They say here, 'Another fifty years and the Church will recognize women priests.' I'd prefer to wait for the official recognition and I won't be around for the official proclamation!)....I would like to suggest that everything at the international meeting service goes along as planned from the beginning up to the end of the Readings and the giving of a short or shared reflection, to be followed by the Prayers of the Faithful. Eucharistic ministers could give Communion and read the final prayers. It's not Mass, of course, but I doubt whether anyone would feel terribly let down or disappointed with the para-liturgy. I don't think I'd stay if the Mass were to go ahead--I'd have an early night instead.

From the USA:

I would go ahead with the celebration of the Eucharist. I would not be concerned about whether or not there was an ordained woman present. (If there was and she would like to lead, fine with me.) If those present were united in prayer and grateful for the presence of Christ-among-us, I would feel fine. If the celebration were postponed, I would feel that we had deferred (perhaps rightly) to the more reluctant among us. In answering these questions I have deliberately not used the word 'mass'. For me, if those present were deeply wanting to be united with one another in Jesus' memory and presence, I cannot imagine Jesus saying: 'No, I won't come unless you do it according to regulations.' Figuring out the exact definitions of 'Catholic mass' I leave to professional theologians.



MEMOR UN WOODS

From Kenya:

An ordained woman priest cannot be a Grail member, is that so? Or am I behind the news? I know the Grail is a lay women's movement. So I cannot imagine her being in the international meeting. A lay woman can perform a service without a priest but we cannot call that service a mass....An ordained woman is a member of the clergy, is that not correct? I joined the Grail because it is a Christian lay women's movement. Thank you until I hear from you or from anybody who would help me to think more deeply.

78.12.07

From the USA:

I would not have been able to say this a year or two ago, but I would feel very comfortable about having a woman perform the service. I do go to Mass every Sunday and like it very much, and plan to continue this as I find it a beautiful way to be with the larger community of people in a worshipping way. But I am beginning to think that God is not as strict as we have been thinking, and as to putting off a worship service until the next day, I doubt very much if this is what She would want! I would say that we can worship together with whomever is there and I would enjoy that!

Many thanks to all these contributors. Look for more in the next Net-Link. Please send copies of your partner correspondence, and/or comments on what you read here, to me at

Grailville  
932 O'Bannonville Road  
Loveland, Ohio 45140  
USA

Joyce Dietrick, USA  
Network Coordinator



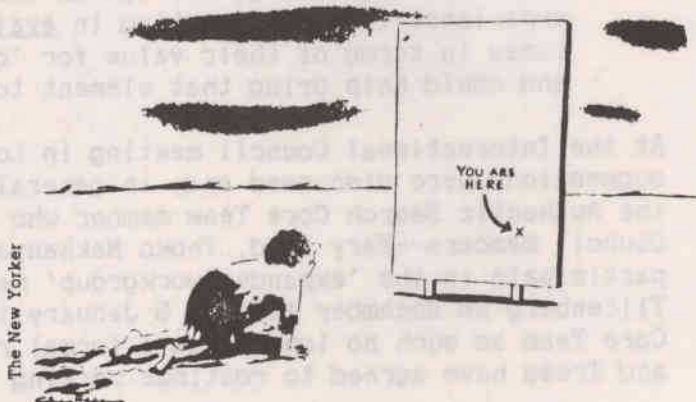
## AUTHENTIC SEARCH UPDATE

'Why is it so difficult for us to talk about our spiritual life?'

'How can one be sure it is God one is experiencing during periods of meditation, and not an emotional self-satisfaction? Can one tell the difference?'

'Why is it that "finding God" never happens for many people?'

The last issue of Net-Link included an 'Interim Report on Authentic Search' (November, 1986, p. 19). That report reviewed the history of the Authentic Search process, beginning at the 1984 IGA, and continuing through the discussion groups that met in many Grail countries. Some of the comments and questions from the discussion groups, such as the ones quoted above, appeared there, too. The report explained further that the Authentic Search Core Team would be meeting with one of the Living



The New Yorker

Faith Network coordinators in November to work on the next stages of the process. This 'Update' is to let you know the results of that meeting and of the International Council meeting in January:

In November Joyce Dietrick came to the Tillerberg to meet with the AS Core Team of Mimi Maréchal, An van Tol, Tress van Voorst tot Voorst and Carol White. It turned out to be one of those 'gifted' meetings in which the process flows along very well and everyone seems to be quite creative and in harmony with each other! (Thanks be to the Source of creativity and harmony....) And at the end of our time together we had a clear proposal for the future of the Authentic Search process.

This plan grew out of our awareness that the task given us by the '84 IGA was closely related to the goals being set up by the 1988 IGA Workgroup--that is, as the original AS proposal said it, 'TO DEEPEN OUR UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCE OF AUTHENTIC SPIRITUAL SEARCH IN TODAY'S GRAIL'. In fact, it seemed to us that there was no reason to proceed further with the AS project as a separate process. Rather, we proposed that the whole Authentic Search plan should be taken up into the IGA preparation work. In this way, we hoped, nothing of the original project would be lost but, instead of being done by a few small groups, it would be done by all Grail members preparing for the next IGA.

Here are some of the specific points that we suggested:

1. The work of developing 'Testimonies' within the countries, then reflecting on the Testimonies of other groups, obviously fits in with the original goals of Authentic Search. We proposed a method for arriving at these Testimonies; you will find this listed as Method A ('Think of the Grail in your country as a tree....') in the material you receive from the IGA Workgroup.
2. In order to keep the continuity with the AS process, and to make sure that none of its important elements would get lost in the IGA planning, one member of our Core Team could join the IGA Workgroup.



3. The objectives of the Authentic Search meeting originally scheduled for summer 1988 could be met by a meeting of an 'expanded workgroup' which would include both the IGA Workgroup and a few more people to bring in other viewpoints and approaches. This meeting would use the AS model of action/reflection. That is, they would live, pray, work, celebrate, and play together, and base their exchange of ideas on their shared experiences. But in addition to all this, they could also focus on the Testimonies of the various countries as material for their reflections.
4. Some of the participants in this expanded workgroup meeting would form the core of a prayer/liturgy team for IGA '88. Having already struggled face-to-face in their workgroup meeting with all that is involved in intercultural worship and reflection, they would have a good background for preparing such gatherings in the IGA itself. They would also have experience from this meeting in evaluating liturgies and prayer times in terms of their value for 'our spirituality and its expression', and could help bring that element to the IGA.

At the International Council meeting in Louisiana in January, these suggestions were discussed and, in general outline, approved. Carol White is the Authentic Search Core Team member who now joins the IGA Workgroup; three Council members--Mary Boyd, Thoko Makhanya, and Rose Ogwel--were chosen to participate in the 'expanded workgroup' meeting which will take place at the Tiltenberg 28 December 1987 to 5 January 1988. Although the Authentic Search Core Team as such no longer has a formal responsibility to carry out, Mimi, An and Trees have agreed to continue working together with Carol as needed.

Now for the movement at large the next big task is producing our Testimonies: Blessings on all of us as we go to work on this special challenge for our future together!

Carol White  
The Netherlands

Fundação Cuidar do Futuro

#### A PERSONAL RESPONSE

EDITORS' NOTE: We received the following letter written in Dutch, translated it and passed it along to the Network Coordinators. Although it is addressed to us, they agreed that it seemed to belong here in the Living Faith section, as part of the continuing dialogue around faith issues.

Dear Editors,

As I was reading Net-Link, the following ideas came to my mind. If I would write them in English I would never get anywhere. Therefore here I am, just spontaneously:

On p. 22 [November 1986] it says: 'Why is it so difficult for us to talk about our spiritual life?...'

My reply: Because it is a question of being in contact with the invisible, the unspeakable. Christ talked in parables. I think that we too can talk about it only in symbolic language, and we Westerners are not good at that.

When I went on to read one page further in that issue, and came upon that beautiful article about "Search: An East African Reflection", then I could see how an African is able to just lightly touch the unspeakable with images of this world.



When I talk with Westerners about 'personal contact with God', I often get the question: 'Do you really believe in a PERSONAL God?' When I then answer wholeheartedly YES, they often look at me as if they would like to say: 'Poor you, do you believe in that Father with a beard?' Of course I do not see it like that! But should not the One that created personhood have the qualities of a person Himself, even though He of course is beyond all human qualities? And isn't personal contact one of the most important aspects of being a person? Of course we cannot communicate on His high level: the baby of a mother with a triple PH.D. cannot do that either! Yet it works! Marvellously well!

Well, here I am reasoning in my Western way again. My African friends are much better at pointing to the unspeakable: searching, imaging and praying!

--Hilda Canters  
The Netherlands

when we say 'god is eternal', we mean:  
 god is eternally young.  
 god is ever green,  
 ever verdant  
 ever flowering.  
 every action of god is new,  
 for god makes all things new.  
 god is the newest thing there is;  
 the youngest thing there is.  
 god is the beginning  
 and if we are united to god  
 we become new again

meister eckhart  
1260 - 1328

May you also become new again  
 with the New Life of this holy season.

--The Editors



# Liberation

WOMEN BREAKING BOUNDARIES: MAKING GLOBAL CONNECTIONS  
December 31, 1986 - January 4, 1987

An international, interfaith, intergenerational, inter-class, inter-lifestyle, interracial group of seventy women gathered at Grailville to begin the new year together. Twelve different countries were represented: The Philippines, Kenya, Portugal, Costa Rica, Guatemala, New Zealand, India, Jamaica, Germany, England, Canada, and Japan, along with many from the USA, including low-income and welfare women as well as professionals, seminarians, students, homeworkers and others. The purposes of the gathering were to:

- share life experiences;
- analyze the systematic factors that make women the poorest of the poor;
- examine the global connections between sexism, racism, classism, imperialism and militarism;
- strategize to transform oppressive structures;
- look at faith as a resource of hope for a different world;
- deepen our appreciation of each other's cultural riches.

For those of us who were together, it could not have been a more enlivening and hopeful way to begin 1987!

The programme grew out of a meeting a year ago of the US Grail Women's Task Force, Liberation Task Force, International Team and Religious Forum Team. At that time we envisioned a programme which would present a more whole expression of our Grail vision, bring our different perspectives together, and reach out to other women in the USA who are also longing and struggling for a deeply rooted change in our society.

I am rushing this off to Net-Link now because we feel that the format of the days really worked well and that a similar approach could be used in other places:

The programme began with all of us exploring a boundary that we encounter in our lives right now. We found symbols for that and then shared in small groups about different experiences of boundaries--which ones were destructive, which ones were helpful, etc. One group liked the word 'frontiers' because it seemed to signify openness and a more positive understanding of boundaries. After sharing some of our most significant insights in the total group, we were ready to begin looking at the situation of women in our own country.

Again we started with our own experiences and stories. Five women from the USA told about: the struggle for adequate housing and fair treatment by landlords; the struggle for daily survival; an expulsion from medical school because of political activity; the instant poverty caused by a mid-life divorce, etc. Then Licha Kraemer and Dorothy Rasenberger of the Liberation Task Force helped us move from the social and economic particulars of these stories to a wider analysis of the socio-economic dimensions present in our US society.

On the following day we again started by valuing our experience as women and heard very powerful stories of the oppression and exploitation of women in five different countries: Kenya, Guatemala, Portugal, Costa Rica and the Philippines. The response to these stories was an international economic analysis given by the Jamaican economist Marjorie Williams, a specialist in economic literacy work with women.





From these two analyses we moved to some critical questions: Is global sisterhood really possible? What do we actually share and what do we not share as women from different cultures? Janet Kalven and Mary Buckley of the Women's Task Force helped us to look at patriarchy and how it affects us in different cultures in the areas of law, education, health, media, politics, economics, family life, religion. And whenever we met in small groups we had at least one person from another culture to help broaden our perspective.

We spent the following morning reflecting in a quiet, meditative way on the sources of hope that sustain our vision and our work for transformation. We reflected alone and then in small groups, and then brought our most significant sharings to the total group. The morning was concluded by a response on 'living in hope and in solidarity with the oppressed' given by Rev. Maria Aris Paul, a Guatemalan Episcopal priest who works with the Hispanic Pastoral Institute in New York.

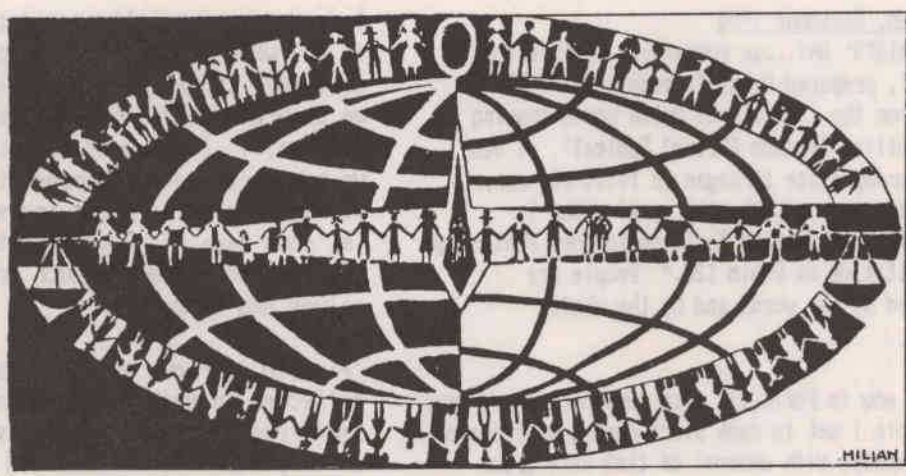
Finally, after watching 'The Global Assembly Line', an excellent film which shows the exploitation by multinationals of women labourers in Mexico and the Philippines, we began the hard work of wrestling with strategies, directions, networking, and policies for the future.

Interest eventually settled around five areas of concentration:

- Sexuality and Women's Oppression
- Cleaning Up Our Own House (issues that divide women)
- Doing Theology in an Oppressive and Imperialistic Society
- Preparing for the Women's Alternative Economic Summit
- Tools for Education and Information on Social/Economic Processes

We came away nourished and informed and really committed to work in a more whole and global way for transformation. Already there are many developments growing from this time together and possibilities for similar regional gatherings. Outlines of the content shared during the programme are available from the Liberation Task Force at Cornwall. We'd love to hear about it if you try anything like this!

--Peg Linnehan  
USA



...POWER TO DO GOOD.

MODELO Project = Women(M) Organizing(O) for Local(LO) Development(DE)

INTRODUCTION: SOME EXPERIENCES THAT INSPIRED ME

I started writing this article for at the council meeting in Louisiana and I finished it back in Portugal in the midst of preparations for a formation programme for young women in the MODELO project. Before you read what I wrote then, I feel the need to share with you some recent experiences of hope: I was in touch with people in many places, people who are struggling against the dominant currents, who are trying to survive as human beings through their efforts to create places, countries, a world in which we all would like to live.

Some of those moments are--

USA, January 1987

NEW YORK CITY, TRINITY CHURCH, 'Celebrating Our Differences'....In the middle of the day and of all the business on Wall Street, a church full of people looking forward to justice....One of the speakers, Rev. Jesse Jackson of the National Rainbow Coalition, finishes his speech by saying, 'Power is not meant to feel good; power is meant to do good.'

NEW YORK, THE SOUTH BRONX....Grail women are working in the midst of oppressed and poor people who are forced to leave the city, often literally burned out of their homes so that the land can be made available for the rich. Now they are organizing neighbourhood committees in order to participate in a broad campaign to produce housing for low income people.

FRANKLIN, LOUISIANA....In this small town, Grail members are running a clinic for poor, mostly black, families. They are struggling to survive--and they are managing!

The Netherlands, November 1986

LEIDEN, ALL SAINTS' DAY...an ecumenical celebration in the 'Ekklesia', prepared by my friends from 'OVER'. (OVER comes from the initials of Dutch words meaning 'Our Responsibility Demands [being] Radical'. I was part of this group since it began in 1971; for many years they supported my work with rural women in Portugal.) OVER has invited Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo to give a meditation on Psalm 126." People are obviously moved by her words and by the whole celebration....

Finally, back now in Portugal, I am remembering the many wonderful people I met in each place during my travels. As my relationships with several of them have grown deeper, I feel that through each other we are becoming more and more truly a part of humankind, of 'the people

of God' on the road, working for justice, for 'the coming of the kingdom'....

LOUISIANA: SOME QUESTIONS I'M STRUGGLING WITH

It is the 6th of January, 1987: An inspiring day to start writing about how we are moving forward with the women in the MODELO project!

My heart is very much here in Louisiana, impressed as I am by the history of this part of the USA, with its long struggle for equal rights (30% of the people in this region are black) and against poverty (23% unemployment in this state due to the 'oil crisis' and low prices for sugar cane). But I am also delighted with the beauty of all this 'healthy' nature and with the sympathy and hospitality of the Louisiana Grail members and others who take care of us.

Though I am far away from my work in the MODELO project, it is present here when we think about how we will move forward as Grail toward--and after--the IGA of 1988. We have been asking ourselves if we, as an international movement, will be able to cope with the breakthroughs in our societies in the nineties. I myself think we have a difficult road ahead as we search for a common critical understanding of the world we live in. I wonder: are we ANALYZING well, and enough? Can we distinguish between the RADICAL and the LIBERAL solutions, without dividing what belongs together and without trying to mingle what is rightly separate?

Indeed, are we still trying to be radical? And if so, what does that mean for our options and actions? In the midst of all the complexity, can we as Grail formulate what it signifies to be 'radical'? Do we even want to do this, or have we become too much 'a product of the eighties' marked by ever stronger individualization? That is, does each of us now try to find her 'own way', without seeking much orientation from group values and norms?

'Finding your own way' did have a positive value, reflected in such concepts as 'emancipation', 'self-realization', 'assertiveness', etc., which developed in the sixties and seventies in the rich countries. But what was a sign of growing democratization in those days often became in the

\*A transcription of Maria's talk at the OVER celebration appears at the end of this article.



eighties a tool in the defense of purely individual interest in a 'struggle for survival'.

The big question now is how to reconcile the power to 'realize ourselves', to direct our own lives, with the power to do social and political good together with other people....

#### MODELO PROJECT: THE SAME QUESTION AGAIN!

The project began in 1985 as a continuation of former Grail projects with women in rural areas in northern Portugal. The main goal of MODELO is the formation and organization of women who produce traditional handcraft articles, so that they are eventually able to create their own jobs. CEBEMO (of the Netherlands) is providing a financial subsidy for three years.

At the moment we are reaching women in 12 villages in four regions. In March Golega will host the first unit of a formation programme for 20 young women. They have recently learned the techniques of spinning, knitting, weaving and embroidery, and they have also showed leadership talents. Many of them perfected their handcraft skills in technical formation programmes guided by older women in the villages. Those programmes have been given since Portugal became part of the European Economic Community (January 1986) and are subsidized by the European Social Fund. The formation in the EEC-sponsored programmes is mainly technical and at the end most young women go back home without any guarantee of a job.

MODELO intends to continue the formation process and to create with the women a network of solidarity, especially regarding the selling of their products. There are already some concrete possibilities for export of these articles. Back home the young women will create their own forms of organization and will be supported by the project for two years. (Actually, some other women in the project have already organized cooperatives in their villages. Their example is a real challenge to the younger ones!)

Well now, what about the 'liberation' of all those rural women I have worked with during the last 10 years in northern Portugal? That is, what about their discovery of their own potential, the growth of their self-respect and creativity, etc., etc.? What about the power they should have gained through the many meetings, programmes and actions?

Let me say first that most of these women are living in a situation of material poverty and have very little formal education. They are all living in families, sometimes in extended families--families of their own or, in the case



of the younger ones, in their parents' homes. In the several evaluations of the work with them during these ten years there is a phrase that is repeated again and again: 'I became "Dona de minha vida" [mistress of my own life]'. This means that they have begun to experience the power of self-direction. This power expresses itself in changing their positions and their behaviour in the family in relation to husbands, children, parents, and brothers. Outside the family it means that they have assumed responsibilities in the villages they live in. They have taken many initiatives such as the organization of cultural and sport activities and popular feasts, the creation of 'kindergartens', and the organization of cooperatives.

Their process shows that, in a situation of material poverty, liberation through women's 'self-realization' is not only a matter of the individual person. Rather, it is from the beginning interwoven with the efforts of others, mainly other women. Their achievements and performances are not experienced as individual results, but are lived in relation with others. They are, in short, social.

On the other hand, in the middle of all these collective efforts, one sees clearly (and the women talk about) the satisfaction of being personally recognized, the good feeling of personal prestige. I am not trying to idealize their lives, which are in fact often very difficult. But these women give me the sense of something that is balanced, that is sound.

I think I can generalize and say that they use their newborn power to do good, and that that makes them feel good. And I know very well that they are a continuing challenge to me.

--Marijke de Koning  
Portugal

MEDITATION ON PSALM 126  
All Saints' Day, 1986

---

When the Lord brought back the captives  
of Zion, we were like men dreaming.  
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with rejoicing.  
Then they said among the nations, 'The  
Lord has done great things for them.'  
The Lord has done great things for us; we  
are glad indeed.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the  
torrents in the southern desert.  
Those that sow in tears shall reap  
rejoicing.  
Although they go forth weeping, carrying  
the seed to be sown,  
They shall come back rejoicing, carrying  
their sheaves.

We hear this psalm, and a great wave of hope leaps up  
around us. In a flash we see the moments of our life  
which are moments of sowing, we see the difficulties,  
the pain, the tears....But then comes the promise of the  
harvest, and we see the abundance, the fulfillment, all  
our dreams and labours changed into the sheaves we bring  
back with us.

Such are the words of wisdom in the bible. They set  
before us the simple things of everyday life, and their  
logic is aimed at comforting us on our way, at giving us  
enlightenment. They make us think of the messianic  
times: they say again and again that the time will come  
when all the tears will be washed away from our faces  
and from our hearts.

It is right and good that the words of wisdom, almost  
like popular sayings in the Jewish and Christian  
traditions, should be a source of encouragement for us.  
They are meant to be so. But this psalm does not  
contain only those words of wisdom. In fact, the psalm  
has three parts:

It is, first of all, a memory, a remembrance of  
something vital for the collective history of Israel.

Next it is a prayer of supplication, a prayer which  
is concise, direct, vehement, a prayer coming out of  
today's situation.

Finally, the words of wisdom are the conclusion of  
the psalm.

#### The Prayer of Supplication

A long, deep cry comes from this psalm. Please, O Lord,  
release those who are captive! Bring back those who are  
in exile. Restore the fortunes of Zion. Please, O  
Lord, bring them back rapidly. Release them with all

your strength, like the sudden water-courses after rain  
cross the desert of Negeb, like the unexpected flow that  
makes the desert fertile again.

For whom is this cry uttered? Who are the captives?  
Where are they in exile? And then from our repressed  
consciousness comes the answer. Before our eyes goes  
the endless procession of those in captivity:

We see those who are deprived of their freedom,  
deported, persecuted, marginalized in their own land.  
We see the millions and millions of refugees moving from  
place to place because they cannot return to their  
countries, with the varied faces so many local wars in  
all regions of the world have given them. We see those  
about whom yesterday the whole church said, 'Blessed are  
those who are persecuted...' and by saying this  
committed herself again to solidarity, to compassion, to  
action.

We see those who are the prey of foreign oppression and  
of national political mismanagement....They are the  
captives of hunger, illness, lack of shelter, utter  
destitution hanging over them as a cloud of despair,  
wrapping them up in the garments of misery.

We can say numbers. We can say, One billion starving,  
one billion illiterate, 400 million unemployed, but the  
numbers cannot hide that they have a name and that they  
also have been marked with the seal of the living God.

We see all those who want to change these inhuman  
situations and are prisoners of the status quo, crushed  
by the dominant powers, internally and externally.  
Though apparently free, they are kept in the jail of  
out-dated institutions, of perverse mechanisms for  
decision-making, of irrational forces which are in our  
time so much of the 'mysterium iniquitatis'.

They are all so intensely present in our minds that  
sometimes we don't know any more if we pray for them or  
for ourselves. Yes, Lord, release those who are  
captive, release them like the torrents in the Negeb!

Now we take a wider view, we look further, more  
intently, and we see another captivity. We see all  
those who are caught in the bondage of sin, of the  
greatest sin of all, the one against the Holy Spirit.  
The Spirit of the risen Lord is this presence in our  
time. It is a Spirit of intelligence, of prudence, of  
strength, of wisdom. And yet, facing the fabrics of  
today's world, we run away from the complexity in which  
this very Spirit is at work. We ignore the intricate  
web of events and ideas, we pretend that we don't see,



that the problems are too big for us to encompass them all.

We are the new captives of this age: We have words and don't speak them out; we have brains and don't think of new solutions; we have emotions and don't feel. This is the land of our captivity where the imagination fades away, where inventiveness is put aside, where conformism is comfortable.

And yet we know, O Lord, that if we want to create a better place for children to live, we have to free ourselves from that captivity. An anthropologist once spoke of 'emigrants in time'; we could speak now of 'people exiled in a past era'. And yet we are so urgently needed in the present era...and understanding the complexity of the time we live in means to be somehow taken up by the Spirit. Yes, Lord, release us all from captivity--and let our new freedom be a torrent of creativity, of perceptive insights, of well worked-out thoughts, of intelligent generosity.



DOMÉNICUS - KRAHM

### The Remembrance

We know that you can bring us back to our time, to our land. You will do that as you have done other wonders for us. We do remember, though we were as in a dream in those exhilarating moments, the joy when we experienced just a glimpse of freedom. We do remember....

We remember when we were in oppression in so many colonized territories, as in Mozambique--and our innocent joy at liberation, and the shining hope in the eyes of that good man and great leader Machel....

We remember when the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires was full with the courageous mothers of those who had disappeared or been murdered, and how the people brought about a renewed sense of liberty and justice....

We remember when we were struck by the mass famines in India, and how today people there can even export their food...We remember when we came into the streets in the Philippines, faced the armed forces, and were able to create conditions for a lasting people's power....

We remember the dawn of a newly found freedom when we awoke, in north and south, east and west, to new signs of human dignity and equality and how we shouted for joy in the streets of our cities. We do remember, though we were as in a dream, all the wonders you did for us, and the stories of the most wonderful moments which our fathers and mothers in the faith kept telling us. How happy we were then! 'Our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with rejoicing. We were glad indeed.'

It is the memory of those moments which makes it possible for us to ask you today, in such darkness--finding it so difficult to understand what is going on in the world, being captured by the modes of thinking of a past era--to ask you again and again, 'Bring your people back from captivity, O Lord!'

### The Words of Wisdom

All of your people go on sowing in this time of exile, sowing day by day one gesture, one word, one action. They are toiling, preparing new ground, suffering with the soil, with drought or flood, so often alone, 'strangers in a strange land'.

Those who want to break through the prison of ignorance and blindness dare to sow new seeds in unprepared and often unfit soils. They go in tears, bearing steadfastly the seed for sowing. Will they see the result? Will they reap?

Yet there is the great mystery. It is through them that creation will be saved. They are the sowers but they are, at the same time, the grain of wheat you sowed about so clearly, O Lord! Now they are invisible like the grain, they are in darkness, they are crossing the total void of silence, of defeat, of impotence. The great void, the unspeakable emptiness has come as a limit, as the grip of alien forces, as a radical interruption in the flow to grasp complexity.

We come back to the words of wisdom in this psalm: We know that a slow transformation will happen and the seed will become a form of life, new, unique, full of vitality. Whatever has grown and fructified is again humankind reaping in joy and gathering the sheaves. It is harvest time. It is resurrection. It is full life forever.

All the saints we celebrated today did nothing else but to dwell in this mystery. Let us hope that we will join them.



Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo  
Portugal

# Women Building New Societies

## WOMANCHURCH: RECLAIMING/REBUILDING



FROM A SMALL BEGINNING....  
LOGO OF THE WOMENCHURCH NETWORK

Announcing the birth of a new initiative

Time: 1982

Place: a large theological conference  
in Vienna

Prognosis: a difficult struggle,  
but the future is hopeful

It all began when German-speaking pastoral theologians invited women from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands to their yearly conference concerning pastoral questions and problems. The main focus at that gathering was on 'the self-understanding of women in the society and church of today'.

Together with those theologians we looked at the situation of women. They wanted to know how women feel, how women think, how they look at the world and church. But at a certain point I myself got the impression that they were only interested in discussing the women; they refused to look at their own power structure, their own role as men who hold hierarchical positions as professors in universities.

Soon it became clear to me that there was no real desire for change within the church. They wanted us to feel that they are also suffering, and with us in solidarity, but finally they enjoy their position and power. It became again very clear to me that, if we want to change this hierarchical and patriarchal church, we as women have to organize ourselves and speak for ourselves. We have to be aware of our strength, our faith, our power as women filled with that Spirit who renews the face of the earth. Moreover, it was important for us not to resign, not to leave the church. Instead we chose to face the present situation and cry out against the discrimination and the oppression of women, and to organize resistance in a positive, meaningful and strong way.

After we left that conference the Womenchurch Network was born, small but lively, and willing to take further steps because we realize that silence is deadly.

Some of us organized a follow-up meeting in Munich in 1983 and invited women of all walks of life, from those working full time in the church to women who have broken with the institutional church but believe in the liberating power of the gospel. It was a colourful group of women, united in the commitment to help create a new church where women and men are equal, where no male domination exists any longer, where women and men are a community working together for the coming of the kingdom of God, a sign for our time.

Who can choose such a goal? It sounds rather unrealistic, considering the structure and present hierarchy in most parts of the world, especially in the reign of Pope John Paul II. But we have the promise of the little mustard seed which is almost invisible, yet one day will be a big tree--and all liberated people will sit under that tree and enjoy life, life in fullness.



Faith in Jesus has something to do with the impossible--never giving up, struggling against all possible odds, believing in the impossible dream that one day the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the paralyzed will walk.

Faith in Jesus gives us power to become children of God. That power is given, through his Spirit, to all daughters and sons, to all who welcome him.

Faith in Jesus is joy: like the woman who found her lost coin, whose joy was great in finding her treasure.

Faith in Jesus is like a woman who took yeast and leavened the flour to make bread for all.

The Womenchurch Network is still alive, struggling but growing. Now I would like to mention some of our concrete aims, which we formulated in this way: It is important for us to be searchers on the move toward

- understanding the gospel in a new way;
- seeing our personal situation in a wider and broader context;
- being in contact with one another to develop solidarity for joined actions;
- creating and living new forms of feminist spirituality;
- opting for new ways to be with the oppressed, the poor, the unheard;
- developing a vision of new partnership of women and men in church and society.

Our first and foremost goal is that we come to a new unity of practice and theory, of faith and life. Here we can learn from the pedagogy of Paulo Freire and the Latin American Liberation Theology. We meet once a year on the national level, focussing on the praxis of our own experience, planning new activities, and working on further development of our Network. A team is making a newsletter through which we are in communication with one another throughout the year. By now we have some regional groups, though these need more development because many of our women are quite isolated geographically. We have also made some good contact with women in other groups fighting for the same goals as we are: Only when we are many are we strong.

I am part of the coordinating team. We still have a long way to go, but every step we make today, now, brings us closer to our dream. At the international council meeting in Lafayette I promised to write for Net-Link. This is it--and I hope it is a small contribution to Womenchurch internationally.

--Resi Bokmeier  
West Germany



## WOMEN AND WORK IN UGANDA

Traditionally, Ugandan women were expected to remain at home and look after the family. This custom has remained with some women, especially in rural areas. Today the church and the government encourage women to take their place in the world, but their family involvements do not allow them to participate in many other activities. I want to give you a clear picture of the daily work of Ugandan women in the rural areas: These women do all the work at home, plus caring for all the members of the family, young and old.

The women's day starts early in the morning, around 6.00 am, and for some even earlier than that. The fact is that most women have from one to twelve children. A typical mother rises, puts water on the fire--and remember she has to use firewood, which is not as quick as using an electric stove. This water will be for two purposes: for bathing children, and for porridge that they will have for breakfast. Meanwhile she cleans the house and the kitchen.

After this she wakes the children, baths them, and makes her husband's water ready, too. Then she goes back to the kitchen to prepare porridge or anything else she has planned for breakfast. She then serves it to the family. After this she dresses the children and sends them to school. Her husband also goes to work. This woman remains at home, washes the dirty plates and cups. She then looks for the most suitable food for the midday meal.



She takes her hoe and goes to the garden, as digging is a daily routine which no woman in the village can dodge. In actual fact, no family in the village can survive without it. Some women do it morning and afternoon in order to increase productivity so that they can avoid buying food at high cost, and at the same time sell the surplus to earn some money to buy other essential commodities like soap, paraffin, etc.

After the day's digging it is the same woman who goes back home to prepare lunch. In addition to that, she is expected to fetch water from the well and goes to collect firewood from the thick forest. Washing the young children's bedding is also her daily routine.

The midday meal is prepared in between all that and served. There is no rest after lunch. She goes on clearing up and preparing for supper, plus caring for the children after school. By the time she has finished all that, supper is ready and they eat. She washes up dishes, baths the children again and puts them to bed. After all the other members of the family have gone to bed, she remains behind finishing up, clearing away all sorts of things. She is the last to go to bed.

Women in rural Uganda are completely occupied the whole day. These are not the only things they do. There are other activities they are involved in, such as being in women's groups to learn some new skills, church activities, shopping, etc., and caring for domestic animals.

Having worked with these women, knowing their background and their problems, I have come to admire their way of being and to appreciate their work. We cannot change their way of life much, but we do help them to build unity--strong unity--in their families, in their women's groups, in the church. We help them make a plan for the day which allows them five minutes of rest.

--Demmy Kangye  
Uganda







### GRAIL WOMEN WORKING IN KENYA

Most of the Grail people in Kenya are involved in women's development programmes through the dioceses. Here is some news of the work they are doing in the various Grail places.

#### Eldoret/Kitale Team

They are a team of six, but at the moment two of them are studying: Veronica Muriithi is in the USA and Elemina Musundi is at the Gaba Institute in Kenya for a one-year programme of pastoral studies.

This team has a project for school leavers. They now have 34 girls in training to learn sewing skills. Last year 30 girls did the trade test and received their dress-making certificates. They can now form their own cooperatives in their communities to generate their own income and be self reliant.

Anne Rono, one of the team members, is leaving her job to help in this project in the coming year. This is a success for us since she will now have more time for the project as well as for other Grail activities.

One woman speaks.... I am Sophy Elizabeth Kibuywa, Social Worker, Eldoret Diocese Coordinator of Social Work and Adult Education programmes. Most of my work time goes into 'education awareness' with parish resource teams, women's groups, and some specialized groups like Youth, both girls and boys. My job is to be a facilitator, motivator, enabler, and mobilizer, and I enjoy my work very much.





What I like in the Grail is the spirit of prayer, togetherness, and the sharing of talents which is very much seen--one does not need to strain for it. I like the experience, the work and hospitality of Grail members. I always find the Grail vision challenging me, especially living in a country like Kenya. My continuous search in the Grail keeps me going. I am always thirsting for God's world. I am nourished every time but I find that the search to be closer to God has never been achieved. On my way to thirsting for God's love I have hills, pot holes, thorns, etc. I need the Grail community to challenge and affirm me on my way.

### Machakos Team

The six members include teachers, health workers and an office worker. They have started a nursery school within Machakos town to help the preschool children in this community where there was no nursery school before. The Grail members will be managing it. There is also a plan for a girls' group in the future.

Geraldine Husing, who has been working both in Machakos and nationally, is going back to Holland in April 1987. Her contract is over and now she would like to do the same kind of work, but in a different form, in her home country. Geraldine has trained a number of women leaders in Machakos in community based health care. That programme is now being run by one of the local women leaders--a very good example of shared leadership.

Team member Monica Waya is involved in a water project in her community, helping the women get clean water. And Angelina Kyonda is working in Nairobi but goes to Machakos for Grail meetings. Her job is with the National Catholic Secretariat, Dept. of Family Life Education, dealing with Natural Family Planning.



One woman speaks.... Catherine Kavita is my name. I am married and the mother of four children. I work with the Machakos Diocesan Development Office as a secretary/typist. That means that most of the time I have to stay in the office. Only on weekends I sometimes go out to teach our women Natural Family Planning.

Staying in the office so much, I used to find the combination of office and housework very tedious, until I joined the Grail members who were always very encouraging. They give moral support, spiritually and also in daily living. I should actually say that what I found in the Grail vision is something which cannot be bought because I can say that it changed my life completely and made me more mature spiritually and enlightened my life to spiritual living.

I am always happy to continue searching for that enriching spirit which I do not have alone, at least to learn more about Christ-life. Whenever we meet I am always enriched by the sharing and reflections which are very helpful, especially to a growing woman like me.



## Kisumu Team

Nine members, including teachers and social workers, are all involved in community development, mostly with women. Elizabeth Owiti and Perpetua Anyango are working in the Grail project GELP (Getting Education for Life Preparation).

GELP is a formation programme for young school girls age 13-20 and onwards. This covers spiritual formation, family life, agriculture, etc. The programme is now reaching about 1000 girls in groups in many different communities. The need for this project came from the women, and the Grail had involved local women as leaders to work with the girls in their communities.

Out of GELP have come two school leavers' groups, one for those who have been in the programme and one for those who drop out of school due to lack of school fees but would like to learn more skills. This is a new development which needs more attention. Irmgard Grasil, Grail member from Germany, will come to help for two months, teaching handcrafts.

Margaret Amol is now doing her studies in Nairobi and Perpetua Anyango is going for a one year social work course at Kobujoi Social Training Centre. Rose Ogwel is working with the Catholic diocese of Kisumu, coordinating the women's development programme which is reaching 320 women's groups with about 15 women per group. There are women leaders, including Grail members, who have been trained in leadership project management to help these groups. The programme is geared toward improving their incomes and the issues which affect women such as:

- lack of clean water;
- participation in church activities;
- community development and decision-making;
- the role of youth in the church and community;
- basic Christian community.



One woman speaks.... I am Rose Ogwel, Kisumu Team Coordinator, Grail international council member for Kenya, and also one of the National Leadership Team. My job with the Diocesan Dept. of Women's Development programme combines with my Grail commitments because all Grail members in this team are working in development in their own communities. The success of the Grail project in Kisumu has come out as a result of the involvement of the women leaders and cooperation of the Development Office in which I am employed.

Now that all this is in place, I am planning to take a leave of absence to do the Grail work full time, if I get permission from my employer.

## Nairobi

There were two people in Nairobi, but since Mary Busharizi went back to Uganda, Pauline Makwaka has been alone and has been joining the Machakos team in their meetings. Pauline is working with Ondugu Society of Kenya in the slum area of Nairobi. She is head teacher in a primary school for mentally retarded children. She is also involved in a women's group in this slum community.



One woman speaks....

## KENYAN WOMEN

How full of vigour  
 How full of plans  
 How full of initiative  
 How full of potential

## YOU ARE.

I am Geraldine Huising and I want to share an experience with you: Recently I happened to be visiting Segá parish in western Kenya. A group of 25 women had gathered on the parish compound for an evaluation initiated by the development office for the funding agency. I just happened upon that group but was able to sit in and listen.

I heard that among them they had learned many different skills through diocesan/deanery or parish workshops, and the skills they learned were: Care of the mentally retarded; agriculture; health; leadership; treatment for leprosy; handicrafts.

When specific workshops are presented, the members of the women's group sit together and decide who will go to which workshop. They all contribute something, either in money or in kind, and leave their families for a week to attend such workshops. On their return they share their newly acquired knowledge with the other women in the group and with their neighbours.

As my field is health, I asked them what their health workers had taught them. They were all happy to explain that they now know how to treat diarrhea and vomiting with a simple formula of sugar and salt in water. They also knew about malaria and its prevention, baby feeding, cleanliness in the home, how to make a dish rack for their utensils, a latrine with a cover, how to plant onions and tomatoes and greens near their homes for a kitchen garden. They make their compost heaps and boil their drinking water. Their health and their children's health has greatly improved since this knowledge was shared by those who had trained as community health workers.



Then I had a discussion with their trainer, Margaret Banda, who was herself prepared for this work in one of our Training of Trainers courses. She told me that in 1983 she trained 14 women for three weeks with a refresher course in 1984. In 1984 she trained another 27 women for three weeks with a refresher course in 1985 and in 1986 she started another course in another parish with ten participants.

Margaret, a social worker, coordinates all groups in Segá and Ulewala parishes and works as a trainer. This is a full time job as there are already 12 women's groups in Segá alone. This whole programme of women's development is coordinated by Rose Ogwel, who has been assisted by Perpetua Anyango and Margaret Amol. They stimulate, train, coordinate and help the Kenyan women to develop their talents and potential in order to serve their families, other women, and their country.



### National Grail in Kenya

On the national level, the Kenyan Grail organizes workshops and, together with other women leaders, facilitates groups on the role of women in community development and the role of women in the old and new testament as compared to the church today. The latter programme is called 'Women in/and the Bible'. It stresses women's call as Christians to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ! This programme is conducted in three one-week phases. Women theologians and others with special skills are invited to come and give their insights.



### Founding a New Grail Centre

For a long time Kenyan Grail members have greatly desired to have their own house where they could have meetings without having to use other centres which are very expensive. Since 1982, in fact, people were looking for a piece of land and the possibility of putting up a community house.

As the need for the formation of young girls in Kisumu became more urgent, the team looked even harder for the land, which they finally got. Then they joined hands with the national Grail to look for the means of putting up a house. With the joint effort of the Kenyan Grail and the Dutch Grail, which provided some funds, we managed to start the building of the house in April 1986 during the East African Grail Formation programme which was taking place in Kisumu. The foundation was blessed and building started under the supervision of the Kisumu team. The house was ready for use in December 1986.

## Fundação Cuidar o Futuro



It was a great joy for us on December 13th when we were able to hold our national Grail meeting in the new house. On that very day we were joined by three Grail members from Uganda. On December 14th, the celebration with our sisters from Uganda of the first liturgy in this new house was a great, joyful moment for the Kenyan Grail! Our dream became a reality. The work of the Holy Spirit made it possible for us to accomplish the long awaited task. We now have a place to come together as a community, to have our formation programmes, a place we can welcome our Grail visitors and others. We praise the Lord for this achievement.

--Rose Ogwel  
Kenya



# Net-link letterbox



The two notes that follow here were directed to us as Editors but we think that the compliments actually belong to all those who have contributed to Net-Link. So here are a couple of bouquets for all of us!

The Editors

Dear Editors,

This Net-Link was excellent--very interesting work-related articles and reflections. Thank you.

Helen Adler  
USA

Dear Mimi and Carol,

Net-Link is as a pearl between stones and I'd like to thank you for the beauty you share with us in the form of the articles, the layout, and the inspiration it contains....

Love,  
Ger Huising  
Kenya

## Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

...And this letter is almost an article in itself, but it is a reaction to the whole last issue, rather than to one Network's section, and was sent to us Editors--so we thought it belonged here in Letterbox....

Dear Carol and Mimi,

I empathize with your struggle to put out a 'theme issue' of Net-Link, and now that you've done it, the rest of us who failed to respond to your first requests can say, well--but you should have included this and this.... I liked the November '86 issue very much and was moved by the straight-from-the-heart quality of each of the contributions. And, obviously, I was inspired to write to you now.

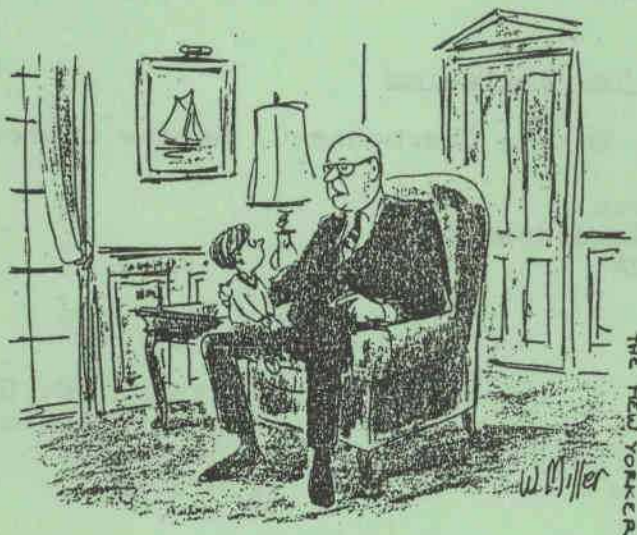
My reaction of course reflects my own special concerns. A few days after reading it I suddenly said to myself, 'But wait a minute: Nobody talked about working for money.' Probably mostly because no one with that on her mind got around to writing, but I also wonder if it's because some women with a Grail-type orientation share my profound ambivalence/confusion/guilt/you-name-it about that subject. (And then many others perhaps just don't care!)

I am 47 years old, and I spent the first part of my work life in nonprofit work such as teaching and funded community development projects. I recently got a masters degree in telecommunications and now work as a consultant on both public and private sector projects. I consider this an



interim solution and feel that I should settle down with a good, stable company which would provide a good current income and, more important, those benefits [health insurance, life insurance, old age pension, etc.] that I used to think too common and boring to be concerned about. And yet I find it very difficult to set my heart in that direction.

But I am trying to persist, for two reasons. One is simple curiosity, no doubt fueled by the avalanche of publicity given recently to 'career women' in the U.S. The other has to do with the subject of this cartoon



"There are the arts, the sciences, agriculture, and commerce. Stick with commerce, if you know what's good for you."

and with the subject of a haunting book, All That Is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an Appalachian Region by David E. Whisnant (Chapel Hill, 1983).

This book describes the work done by university-educated women in the 1920s and 30s in impoverished communities of Appalachia. It shows how these women had the time and family money plus the schooling and idealism to feel they had an important contribution to make. But also, there were still very few other types of jobs open to them at home. They arrived full of hope for social change, and yet they were systematically steered toward efforts of a 'softer' nature--collecting folk songs and stories, reviving handicrafts (all things I happen to love dearly). They were not permitted to address bedrock basic issues, namely the feudal conditions of a society that actually belonged to the mining companies. Most of the women seem to have accepted that limitation and did wonderful, lasting work wherever and however they could.

What I'm getting at is that I am personally preoccupied with my own aversion to 'commerce' and wonder to what extent I have been warned to stay away. And yet it is just this which leaves control of the bulk of economic resources in the hands of men. Which gets me to the cartoon: I am left wondering what message I would like Grail mothers, biological and otherwise, to be giving to small girls on their laps at this moment. How can we live out the 'power to transform' and 'power with', not 'power over', idea? And especially, how can we do that while still not turning our backs on 'commerce' which, like it or not, has such influence in our lives...?

Best,  
Anne McKay  
USA



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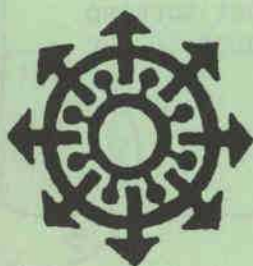
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